SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

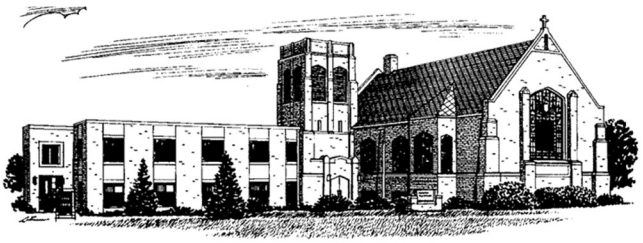
Typical Sunday at Saron:

Fall, Winter and Spring (began Sept 10):
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer (begins May 26, 2024):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*



PASTOR JOAN'S ARTICLE FOR APRIL 2024

I hope you had the opportunity to check out the labyrinth that was in the lounge area during the Lenten season. Whether you prayed it, danced it, sang it, or "simply" took in its beauty, I hope that it served as a place of comfort, peace, encouragement, affirmation, or joy, whatever was your need. I hope you will visit it again, or for the first time, the next time it is displayed for use. My many heartfelt thanks to Kathy Bergh, who painted the path, Laurie Caple, who painted with great thought the embellishments – creatures and images from nature - as well as Janet Boyd who helped her. Hours and hours were spent on this project with attention given to precise details, such as fish and butterflies native to Michigan. Every time I visit it, I see something new.

It fit well with our mid-week series on "Wild Hope: Stories for Lent from the Vanishing." Many thanks to David VanDenbergh, Kate Ulrey, Ed Staude, Denise Cook, and Tyler Cook who eloquently reflected on the plight of God's creatures who are nearing extinction after hearing their stories. What a joy to hear the many voices speak to how the creatures' stories intertwined with our own. And now, readied by the acknowledgment of our own failings, we move from Lent to Easter, from death to life, from the cross through the empty tomb to new life in Jesus. It's time to shout our "Alleluias!" for Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! (See related article - Wild Hope)

- Pastor Joan

-- Blessing of the Graduates! --

We will offer a blessing of graduating seniors in early May.
If you or a member of your family would like to be included, please let the church office know.
Whether it is completion of high school or a post-high school program, your Saron family would be honored to commemorate your accomplishment.

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 9am-noon
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Tuesday Mornings and by Appointment

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;
John Olson is at Woodland Terrace in Bridgman.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

4/1 Shadden Gulley
4/1 Susan Harris
4/2 Laura Hicks
4/3 Landen Alexander
4/3 Brian Culverhouse
4/4 Shawn de la Foret
4/4 Elizabeth Gaspari
4/4 Elise Olson
4/4 Margot Olson
4/5 Brighton Hooper
4/8 Janet Larson
4/9 Scott Kohs
4/11 Alaina Bradley
4/13 Marilyn Lucy
4/14 Lorelei Gorman
4/15 Corrine Ondraka
4/19 Bob Kynast
4/20 Claudia Staude
4/21 Fritz Knauf
4/22 Addison Osgood
4/23 Juliet Jacob
4/23 Ava Osgood
4/25 Clementine Brueck
4/25 Gayle Peterson
4/26 Michael Breyen
4/26 Thomas Siewert
4/27 Linda Pater
4/28 Brooke Henderson

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

4/16 Kathi & Terry Anserello

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

CONGRATULATIONS

Pastor Joan was honored to renew the wedding vows of **Tom & Janet Taylor** in celebration of their 45th anniversary.

A picture of from February 25, the day **Molly Joan Hooper** was baptized. Molly is the daughter of Nick & Kati Hooper. Big brother is Elliot.

FORTIFY & fly

As you are hopefully aware, we will gather for a brief congregational meeting on **April 7 at noon** to consider a proposal on painting the sanctuary and narthex (it's been 20+ years). Part of that project will involve Fortify & Fly funds. We are still waiting on a proposal from the technology committee regarding potential lighting upgrades. Trust that we will continue to give you updates until all projects are complete and all the money has been responsibly spent. As always, thank you for being with us on this journey. Happy spring!

Worship

NEW: ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES

Our new sound system in the sanctuary came with headphones to help those having difficulty hearing the worship service. If this may be of benefit to you, ask Marcus if you can try one out.

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we now have Sensory Bags available for use during worship or at other times when helpful. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made confidentially online via a link in our Thursday mailings. You may include as much detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are also invited to be part of the Monday group at 11am.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes. If you want to know more about this ministry, please contact Pastor Joan.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then **simply return the vase to Saron.**

Nursery

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions.

We are always looking for additional helpers to share the load. Contact Marilyn Lucy (269/759-3464) with questions or interest.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

April 7: 2nd Sunday of Easter
Acts 4:32-35
Psalm 133
1 John 1:1—2:2
John 20:19-31

April 14: 3rd Sunday of Easter
Acts 3:12-19
Psalm 4
1 John 3:1-7
Luke 24:36b-48

April 21: 4th Sunday of Easter
Acts 4:5-12
Psalm 23
1 John 3:16-24
John 10:11-18

April 28: 5th Sunday of Easter
Acts 8:26-40
Psalm 22:25-31
1 John 4:7-21
John 15:1-8

YOUTH GROUP

Our youth group (middle school and high school kids) are planning a pool party & taco bar on **April 14 at 12:30pm at the Bradley Home**. Watch your email for more information.

This group typically meets once per month after the late service for food, fun and fellowship. Friends are always welcome! **Contact Scott at scottgaspari@outlook.com with any questions or to be added to the email list.**

ELCA YOUTH GATHERING

We appreciate your generous support of our youth attending the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans this July. As of printing, Mia, Hunter, Alaina and Brooke now have $2,451 towards their fundraising goal. We are blown away!

In the coming months, we will continue to offer ways for our congregation to support our teens through prayers and fundraising. The chaperones will also need lots of prayers! Stay tuned!

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

We have many educational options to fit your needs and schedule. Always feel welcome to join us, at any time and for as many sessions as works for you.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

Our program year is underway. We have opportunities for many ages and stages!

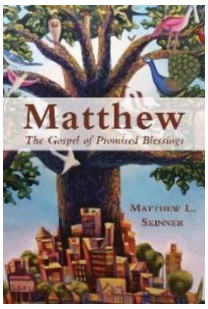
The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Our studies begin again on **April 4 at 9:30am**. We begin with a two-week study entitled, "Following the Way of Jesus: a Lenten Holy Land Journey." While after Easter, we will have opportunity to explore the Holy Land, the theology of Sumud, "steadfastness," and what it means for Palestinian Christians today.

On **April 18**, we will begin "Matthew - The Gospel of Promised Blessings" by Matthew Skinner, a professor at Luther Seminary. From Cokesbury:

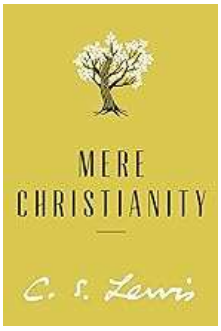


The Gospel of Matthew portrays Jesus and his message as full of tender compassion and urgent warning. This six-part exploration of an enigmatic Gospel takes readers into the themes, topics, and tensions at the heart of Matthew's story about the life and work of Jesus. Chapters focus on blessing and comfort, judgment and retribution, the meaning of discipleship, Jesus' vision for the Church and world, conflicts and complaints, and how the Gospel of Matthew speaks to believers today.

You are encouraged to let Pastor know that you plan to attend so a book can be ordered for you. Cost: $13.50. You can also order your own copy, or an e-book version.

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

We will resume on **April 2 at 6pm** with a study of the book *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis. Published in 1952, the book is drawn from a collection of BBC radio talks that Lewis gave during World War II. David Vandenburgh will lead the study, which will run 12 weeks.



Although you may know the author best for his *Chronicles of Narnia* fantasy series (think *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*), C. S. Lewis is also a noted author of Christian apologetics, i.e. defenses of the faith. In *Mere Christianity*, he argues that there is a fundamental moral law that governs the universe and that Christianity offers the best explanation for this law. It should make for some fascinating and enlightening discussions. Mere Christianity is available in several formats in a range of prices and is also available at local libraries.

We meet **Tuesday evenings at 6pm** in the upstairs lounge for one hour then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. **All are welcome!**

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com)
Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com)

Is your child asking about Holy Communion or extending a hand when approaching the table? Would you like your child to learn more? A First Communion instruction class will be scheduled April/May if there is interest. Please let Pastor know by **April 10** so dates can be tailored to those who plan to attend. Christ's table is open to all God's people, regardless of age. Questions? See Pastor Joan.

We're Back on **April 3**! Forum & Fellowship meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month at **7pm** in the lounge. The next topic is: Dealing with the Politics of Outrage. Everyone is welcome!

We are in an election year, and President Obama once described it well when he called it the political "silly season." It is a time in which many people become self-proclaimed experts. We over-inflate meaning, parse every word, and interpret every action as showing intentional malice or as revealing subliminal messages. The 'message' we hear can blind us to the person behind the words. We are easily caught up in it. It is exhausting, and it has the potential to cause rifts among people who normally get along or at least coexist peacefully. Few people would say at the end, "Well, that was fun!" How can we cope in this supercharged era of politics of outrage and still maintain community?

Some good books on this topic if you're interested:

- *The Amen Effect, Ancient Wisdom to Mend Our Broken Hearts and World* - Rabbi Sharon Brous
- *How to Know a Person, the Art of Seeing Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen* - David Books
- *I'm Just Saying, A Guide to Maintaining Civil Discourse in an Increasingly Divided World* – Milan Kordestani
- *Political Tribes, Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations* - Amy Chua

Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

Join with us on April 7 at 6:30 in the lounge. *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt is the book. According to Amazon, *"Humans, for the most part, you are dull and blundering. But occasionally, you can be remarkably bright creatures."* Marcell, a giant Octopus who can speak, forges an unlikely connection with Tova, a grieving widow who works at the Sowell Bay aquarium where Marcellus lives. Suspend your sense of reality and lean into the impossible and be enthralled.

On May 5, we will wrap up this season with *Black Cake* by Charmaine Wilkerson. You are welcome at any and all of our meetings. The more opinions, the better. If you would like to be included on our email list to receive updates and Zoom information, please contact Kathy Cowall (269)428-0354 or kcowall@ hotmail.com.

There are worse crimes than burning books.
One of them is not reading them.
- Ray Bradbury

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

We will meet on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 7pm in the church lounge. Zoom will be available. A link for that will be emailed close to the meeting date. The study will be from the January/February 2024 issue of Gather magazine titled *Scripture and nature: Teachers of faith, session two: Creatures*, p. 26-31. Laurie Caple will lead the study. **If you have any questions about this group, contact Melanie at 269/449-8399.**

ANNUAL WOMEN'S RETREAT

Mark your calendar for the annual Women's Retreat, scheduled for **May 4, 2024 from 9am - 4pm** at the home of Linda Pater. The cost for the day will be **$15**, which will include breakfast and a late lunch. This is a wonderful opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones. Plan to attend this time of good fun, good food, and good fellowship. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex. If you have any questions, feel free to call **Linda at 269/369-1178**. Hope to see you there!

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who supported our recent Lenten soup suppers. Whether you made a delicious soup, baked a loaf of bread, made a delectable salad, brought a yummy dessert, or just joined us in fellowship as we gathered for a simple supper before the service, your participation was so appreciated. – Merrily Smith

Outreach

THE BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN™ HEART-TO-HEART™

For I was hungry and you gave me food.
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
- Matthew 25:35

On February 22, Doug Wold, Jim Manore, Marilyn Frey, Deb Standen & Pastor Joan were busy at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen preparing lunches. Guests were able to stay warm and enjoy a ham dinner, which included cookies prepared by Kathi Anserello & various Saron members.

If you are able to help with the preparation and serving, or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

NOISY OFFERING

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

We receive a noisy offering
(or those not-so-noisy bills)
on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to
ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Lions RECYCLE For Sight

Help Someone With Your Old Eye Glasses! Do you have any old pairs of glasses? Lions Club International has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several Saron members who are Lions that can deliver our glasses to the club. Consider donating your old glasses to the Lions rather than storing them or throwing them away. Thank you!

INTERFAITH ACTION

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions or need clarification on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org
Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 or lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com

Support

The Support Committee typically meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

SPRING CLEAN-UP

Spring Cleanup is scheduled for
Saturday, April 20 at 9am
Bring gloves and any tools that might be helpful in sprucing up our grounds for the season. The more people we have, the quicker we can all enjoy the rest of the weekend!

Other Bits of News

BURIAL PLOTS AVAILABLE

Are you, or someone you love, in need of a burial plot? Saron has been gifted with two adult plots, which can be divided, at **North Shore Memory Garden in Coloma**, as well as a niche for two end-to-end caskets in the Mausoleum. We are offering these at a reduced current value with proceeds going to the Endowment Fund. If interested, or you have questions, contact **Liz Kunkel (269/429-1132) or Pastor.**

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Wednesday Zoom Coffee Hour at 11am as long as there is interest. The link is sent out each Tuesday afternoon. All are welcome, for a few minutes or the whole hour!

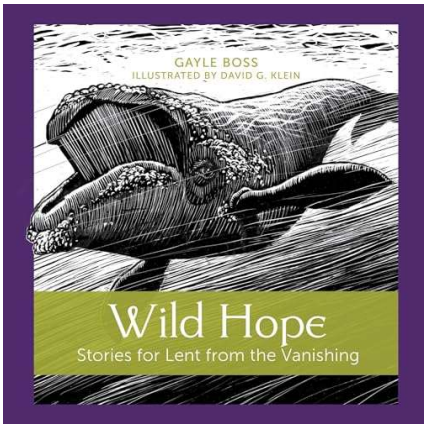
FACEBOOK

We often share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page. We do not put names with the pictures. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Pastor.

In 2025, Saron will celebrate our 150th anniversary! This will be a big deal and a huge undertaking, with events throughout that whole year. The committee has been formed to begin preliminary planning. Watch for details to emerge and if you are interested in helping, don't worry, there will be plenty of opportunities to join subcommittees this year.

We will be having a brief congregational meeting on **Sunday, April 7 at noon** immediately following the 11am service, to entertain a motion to paint the sanctuary and narthex. Guests are welcome to stay and listen. Members are encouraged to attend. The Zoom link will be the same as for the 11am worship.

WILD HOPE *(related to Pastor's article)*



Gayle Boss concludes her book with these words*: Golden lion tamarins and brown pelicans, bald eagles and peregrine falcons, red wolves, gray wolves, Florida panthers, California condors, and Vancouver Island marmots, the nene, the bontebok, the addax, American burying beetles and American alligators, yellowfin madtoms and piping plovers. All these species and more once seemed certain to vanish from the earth. And all have returned-some astoundingly, some haltingly-because humans, many or few, allowed a wild hope to bloom.*

In such as these, a dream, seeded in sadness and love, quietly defies cynicism, and grows by turning fear into work. Their dream-work is daily, tedious, and life-giving. It calls up the body's strength and the mind's capacity; it stretches the soul with listening to those the dream threatens, daring to ask them and others for help. Dream-workers lie awake with doubt and sit still when set back. They go on again, more clear eyed, their love refined by the One Undying Love that animates all things.

Through such as these, the wild-not-impossible hope deep within each of us is born again and again into the world. Love takes flesh and makes all things new. (Wild Hope, 121)

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
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A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

APRIL 2024 NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 11am Prayer Group	**2** 6pm Bible Study	**3** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**4** 9:30am Bible Study	**5**	**6**
7 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**8** 11am Prayer Group	**9** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**10** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Deborah Circle	**11** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**12**	**13**
14 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option	**15** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting	**16** 6pm Bible Study	**17** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**18** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**19**	**20**
21 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option	**22** 11am Prayer Group	**23** 6pm Bible Study	**24** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**25** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **Soup Kitchen Day**	**26**	**27**
28 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Choir & Zoom Option	**29** 11am Prayer Group	**30** 6pm Bible Study				